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ELIJAH & THE PRIESTS OF BAAL

(episode 081)

theme: Don't be torn between two masters, choose God. **scripture:** I Kings 18:21-40 **quote:** "How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow

Him; but if Baal, follow him." Isaiah 18:21 **summary:** The Israelites were torn between serving God and serving Baal, a false god. Elijah, the Prophet, offered the priests of Baal a challenge. They would both prepare a sacrifice on an altar, and whichever god consumed the offering with fire from heaven would be the true God.

Elijah won a decisive victory. God consumed his sacrifice and the people, when they saw it, fell on their faces and said, "The Lord, He is God."

We today may find ourselves hesitating between two gods. Will we serve the God of the Bible or will we serve some other god - like our own selfish desires? These kinds of decisions many times sneak up on us and we may find ourselves beginning to turn our backs on God. But we should pray that in those times the Holy Spirit will show us clearly what we are doing, and give us the grace and the strength to stop ourselves in our tracks and hesitate no longer. Keep your steps and your heart always towards God.

JEREMIAH & STRENGTH FROM GOD

(episode 085)

theme: God will give us everything necessary to do what He commands us to do. **scripture:** Jeremiah 38:1-13; Philippians 4:13 **quote:** "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." Philippians 4:13 **summary:** Nit Whitly interviews the Prophet Jeremiah for this installment of Reality Check. Jeremiah had been called by God to speak to His people about the coming judgement God would send them because of their sin.

There were a number of reasons why Jeremiah might not feel he was the right one to do this. First of all, he was a young man, and he was concerned about his fitness for this position because of this. But God reassured him that He would be with him wherever he went. God even told Jeremiah that the call on his life had taken place before he was even born.

Most of us don't like giving people bad news, and telling a whole nation of God's coming judgement would fit in this category. But God told Jeremiah to not be afraid, and to just speak what he's told to speak.

Jeremiah isn't the only one we see in Scripture who felt inadequate to the task God was giving him, and many of us today can find ourselves feeling similarly. But we can be assured, as Jeremiah was, that when God calls us to a task He will also provide us with everything we need to complete it. That doesn't mean it will be easy. Jeremiah, Moses, Mary and so many others found themselves in painful and hard situations as they fulfilled God's call on their lives. But God's grace is always there to sustain us.

Feeling inadequate to a task God has given us is actually a good place to be in, because then we are less likely to rely on our own abilities and more on His. As the Apostle Paul wrote in II Corinthians 12:10: "When I am weak, then I am strong."

SOLOMON'S WISH

(episode 094)

theme: If God gave you one wish, what would you wish for? **scripture:** II Chronicles 1:7-12 **quote:** "Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this

people; for who can rule this great people of Thine?" II Chronicles 1:10 **summary:** Nit Whitley takes his microphone to the street to ask people this question: If God gave you one wish, what would you wish for? It's an intriguing question, and a challenging one as well. So many things can come to mind, but which would be the best to ask for?

Scripture tells us of a young man who had this opportunity given to him by God. It was Solomon. He had just become king in his father David's place, and God appeared to him one night and said, "Ask what I shall give you."

Solomon's answer may surprise us. He didn't ask for power or riches or fame. He asked for wisdom so that he may be able to rule God's people rightly.

How many of us would have asked for that? But if we were to consider it, wisdom is a very valuable thing to have. If we had power without the wisdom to use it properly, we could end up wasting it all on things that produce nothing. The same could be said of riches or fame. Without wisdom we wouldn't be sure how to use them to the best effect, and could end up losing them.

Wisdom, on the other hand, if applied could produce all the other things as well. And, if we act wisely and give ourselves to the service of the Lord, we would find ourselves greatly useful to God in the advancing of His kingdom.

Would you like wisdom from God? You don't have to wait for Him to ask you, you can ask Him. James 1:5 says, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him."

ELIJAH & GOD'S VOICE

(episode 099)

theme: Many times God speaks to us in a still, small voice. **scripture:** I Kings 19:9-13 **quote:** "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God."

Romans 8:16 **summary:** God can speak to us anywhere at any time. He is not limited in any way. And He doesn't need special effects to make His voice known.

Elijah had fled to Mount Horeb and was there when God called to him. While Elijah was waiting for God's presence a great and strong wind rose up, beating against the mountain. But God wasn't in the wind. Then an earthquake came, but God wasn't in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire. But, again, God wasn't in the fire. After all these there came a sound of a gentle blowing. It was in this that God spoke to Elijah.

As we mentioned earlier, God doesn't need great special effects or dramatic events in order to speak to us. Many times He will speak to us in what we would consider the mundane things of life.

Two of the most common ways for God to speak to us, or are at least very conducive in hearing from God are through reading His word and prayer. It is a good idea to make these two things a regular part of our daily routine. As we do these two things we are, in a sense, setting ourselves up to hear from God on a regular basis because we are spending time close to the heart, and mouth, of God.

CALLING OF SAMUEL

(episode 100)

theme: The Bible is full of stories of how God used young people to do mighty things for Him. **scripture:** I Samuel 3:1-10 **quote:** "Let no none look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe." I Timothy

4:12 **summary:** The Bible is full of stories of how God used young people to do mighty things for Him. One of the most extraordinary lives mentioned in Scripture is that of Samuel, the prophet/priest of Israel, whose story is told in the book of I Samuel. Samuel was just a young boy when God called him and he served God faithfully for many years.

Other young people that God used mightily would include King Josiah (II Kings 22:1-23:30), Naaman's servant girl (II Kings 5:3), David (I Samuel 16-31, II Samuel 124), Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:5-10) and Timothy (I Timothy 4:12). Even Mary, the mother of Jesus, was said to be a young girl when God chose her to give birth to the Savior.

Youth is no obstacle in being used by God. Our godly example, as seen in the way we talk, the way we conduct ourselves, our love, faith and purity, shows others the power and work of God in our lives, bringing Him glory and honor and praise. Live your life so that others may see your good works and give praise to your Father Who is in heaven.

RUTH & LEAVING ALL TO FOLLOW GOD

(episode 108)

theme: Are we willing to leave everything in order to follow God? **scripture:** Ruth 1:1-18 **quote:** "Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God." Ruth 1:16b **summary:** Ruth was a young girl who believed in the living God. She was married to one of the three sons of a man named Elimelech and his wife Naomi who were living in the land of Moab. A sad thing happened. Elimelech and his three sons all died, leaving Naomi and her three daughters-in-law widows. Naomi decided to move back to the land of Judah. She released her three daughters-in-law to return to their father's homes so that they would be provided for and in the hope that they would re-marry. Although two of the young girls returned to their father's homes, Ruth didn't want to go. Nothing Naomi said to her could convince her to leave her mother-in-law.

Ruth had joined herself to God's people and saw value in being a part of them. Her commitment to Naomi meant a severing of her ties with her nation and her religious upbringing. She saw, as many Christians have throughout the ages, that staying in God's will and in service to Him was more valuable than being anywhere else. Even if that meant hardship and suffering.

Ruth can serve as an example to us of being committed to God and desiring to follow Him wherever that may take us.

NEHEMIAH & OPPOSITION

(episode 109)

theme: Don't let opposition keep you from God's work. **scripture:** Nehemiah **quote:** "Do not be afraid of them; remember the Lord who is great and awesome."

Nehemiah 1:14 **summary:** Nehemiah had gone to the city of Jerusalem to rebuild it. It had been in ruins and God had laid it upon his heart to undertake its restoration.

But there were many who didn't want to see this work done, and they attacked it every chance they got. They tried mockery, slander and other forms of treachery. They conspired to attack the workers and frighten them. Hindrances to the work even came from within. But Nehemiah, with wisdom and grace from God, was able to thwart every attempt to stop or stall the work.

In our lives many obstacles will present themselves to keep us from serving God. All many of temptations and trials will conspire against us that can cause us to lose heart. But we must not give in.

Actually, if we are walking with God and desire to be useful for Him, we can expect opposition. It's a sign that we are doing something right. In those trying times we must be convinced that what we are doing is right, and be dedicated to the purpose of God, drawing strength, courage and grace from Him to continue on.

Don't let opposition keep you from living your life for God.

MORDECAI & ESTHER

(episode 110)

theme: God puts us right where He wants us to be, to be used for His purposes. **scripture:** Esther 4:13,14 **quote:** “And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?”

Esther 4:14b **summary:** Esther was a young Hebrew girl living in Persia. She had been raised by her cousin, Mordecai, after her parents died. When the Queen a Persia found disfavor in the eyes of the King, a search went out to find a replacement for her. Esther was chosen to be the new Queen. Mordecai advised her not to reveal her nationality.

One of the officials in the royal court was a man named Haman. Haman had taken a strong dislike to Mordecai, and convinced the King to issue a decree that would allow for Mordecai and all the Jews living in Persia to be destroyed and their land taken from them. The Jewish people mourned.

It seemed to Mordecai that the best hope he and his people had was Esther. If she would approach the King and explain the plight of her people he may be willing to spare them. But, according to the laws and customs of the time, in approaching the King, Esther would be putting her own life on the line. She was understandably afraid.

But Mordecai displayed a trust in God and His sovereignty. He explained to Esther that if should would remain silent, relief and deliverance for the Jews would arise from another place, but that Esther would not escape perishing. He went on to point out the possibility that she may be in her current position for just such a time as this.

Esther did as her cousin asked and God did deliver the Jews through her intervention.

For us today, we must always look at whatever we have, whether resources or position, as being tools that God has given us to be used for His glory and His purpose. God’s plan for our lives includes the place He has us in. Our first concern in all things should be to bring Him glory.

JOSIAH & DISCOVERING GOD’S LAW

(episode 113)

theme: We should desire to make our lives line up with what God says is right. **scripture:** II Kings 22,23 **quote:** “Go, inquire of the Lord for me and the people and all Judah concerning the words of this book...for our fathers have not listened to the words of this book, to

do according to all that is written concerning us.” II Kings 22:13 **summary:** Josiah was a young man who ruled Judah as their king. King Josiah started the work of upkeep on the temple. During this work, the High Priest discovered a long-hidden book. It contained the Law of God. When Josiah heard what was written in the Law he was sad. He realized that he and his people had not been obedient to the words contained in the book, that they had sinned against God. Rather than ignore it, he knew they needed to repent and begin doing what God had commanded them.

Many people today may find themselves in a similar situation to Josiah’s. Through neglect or ignorance they have laid aside God’s Law. Because of this they are doing things that God says are wrong. When someone realizes this has happened, how they react to it shows what’s in their heart.

Some may try to ignore it further. They would rather not have to change things they are doing, especially if they really enjoy those things. They may try to justify themselves and reason away God’s Word and convince themselves that they are alright just as they are.

The better option is the one Josiah took. He acknowledged God’s authority to determine what is right and wrong. He understood that it is unwise to violate God’s Law, and although nothing can be done to change the past, changing the present is necessary if we are to live with God’s blessing.

When confronted with sin, let’s not run from it, but rather embrace it. God’s Law is good for us, and there is no better time than the present to get ourselves in line with it.

SAMSON & USING GOD’S GIFTS

(episode 114)

theme: We should use the gifts God has given us for His glory. **scripture:** Judges 13-16 **quote:** “I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you.” II Timothy 1:6 **summary:** God had given

Samson the gift of strength. God had intended Samson to use this gift to serve His people to the glory of God. But Samson was not a very disciplined man. Over and over he used his gifts for selfish reasons. He also played around with sin. In the end, God still used Samson in spite of his shortcomings, but Samson's life had a sad end, as his sin caught up with him.

Samson's name is listed among the great heroes of the faith in Hebrews 11:32, but his life serves as an example to us of the dangers of playing around with sin and of using God's gifts for selfish purposes.

God can, and will, use us even when we sin. And we are all quite likely to sin from time to time. But the pattern of our life should be marked by obedience to God and submission of our talents and abilities to Him and His service, with a heart to bring Him glory in all things.

SWEET PSALMIST OF ISRAEL

(episode 118)

theme: God can be glorified in whatever circumstance we find ourselves. **scripture:** II Samuel 23:1 **quote:** "I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am." Philipians 4:11 **summary:** Nit Whitly searches out David, called the Sweet Psalmist of Israel, to interview him concerning the many Psalms he wrote. The Psalms cover a wide range of emotions and situations. Some were written at times of great joy, while others were written in times of great trial and despair. Some were written in times of peace, and others in times of war. But, no matter what the circumstances, all the Psalms give honor and glory to God.

How can this be? It seems easy to be thankful and give glory to God when things are going well. It is an entirely different matter when things are hard and there is trouble. It has to do with trust. The more we trust God the more we can look at any situation and believe that His hand is upon it and that He is working in it. We can trust His promise to us never to leave us or forsake us. And that He works all things together for our good.

David's Psalms may cover a lot of emotions and situations, but they have one common theme - giving praise and glory to God. Let's try to practice that same quality.

IN SEARCH OF A BIG FISH

(episode 122)

theme: God gives second chances to those who are repentant. **scripture:** Jonah **quote:** "I will sacrifice to Thee with the voice of thanksgiving. That which I have vowed I

will pay. Salvation is from the Lord." Jonah 2:9 **summary:** God had commanded Jonah to deliver a message to the people of Nineveh. But Jonah didn't want to deliver the message and tried to run in the opposite direction. He soon learned that he couldn't run from God. Finding himself inside the belly of a big fish, Jonah repented of his disobedience and, remembering God's mercy, vowed to do that which God had commanded him. God delivered Jonah from the fish and Jonah delivered God's message.

Like Jonah, we have all had occasion to run from God in disobedience. It is a rather useless thing to do, because God is everywhere, and there is nowhere we can go to get away from Him.

It is good to know that God is very gracious and merciful and willing to forgive all those who come to Him with repentant hearts. He gives us second chances to fulfill that which He has commanded us to do.

It is best to obey God the first time, but if we don't, let's not continue in our sin, but rather confess it and ask God to give us another chance.